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"When a woman feels her first pains she abstains from taking baths and swallows quantities of salt and spiced drinks. She summo a midwife and fastens a cotton thread from the bonzery around the latter's wrists. This precaution might be called the 'sanctification of hands.'

"The midwife comes to stay in the house of her client until after delivery. She is given the choicest food and commands the utmost respect. She may wash her hands only with water which has been perfumed (by means of a variety of mint). Finally, when labor pains begin, the woman sits down with her legs folded and spread wide apart. Her underskirt must be pulled down over her legs and taken in sharply at the waist by a belt. This last precaution is taken so that during the mother's efforts to deliver the child it will not go upwards towards her thorax. The midwife remains in front of the parturient woman, while relatives, friends or, more often, young men hold the woman up and try to divert her with extremely licentious remarks. Some of the young men bring musical instruments, and others bring phalli to which they address such witty reproaches that the patient, despite her pain, responds with an outburst of laughter. There is gambling, drinking and singing, and during all this time the work goes on and the woman gives birth in the midst of the gaiety.

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"No one sees the actual delivery, not even relatives. Only the midwife passes her hands under the skirt and watches attentively so as to intervene if necessary. The child is taken from the mother on a mat, the midwife draws it gently towards her and makes ready to cut the umbilical cord. The latter is cut between two ligatures made with cotton threads, and the actual section made on a weaver's shuttle with a knife which may be more or less ornate depending on the state of the family's fortune (2). The foetal part (about eight

(2) In northern Laos the cord is cut on a cylinder of green bamboo, closed at one end by a joint. The knife is a strip of bamboo cut at a sharp angle so that the siliceous bark forms the cutting edge. All iron or steel instruments are strictly forbidden. (Author's note.)

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centimeters in length) is rolled in leaves of an astringent variety and folded back on the abdomen. The child is then rubbed with slightly spiced oil.

incorporate into the teas which they send abroad. But they appeal to the Chinese and other Orientals, and part of the crop is even set aside and sent as tribute to the court of the Emperor in Peking. 245. [648] [276]

The Shans, the Lus and the Youns use a masticatory called "Mieng" which is composed solely of tea leaves which have been preserved in brine.

PIMENTOS. Since pimento is a much sought-after condiment, and one which is even indispensable to the people of Laos, as to those of neighboring countries, the cultivation of this product is quite widespread. [244 263]

This pimento is of the large, red variety. It is prepared by [378] drying and smoking it, thereby guaranteeing that it will keep. Its name in Laotian is "Mak-Phik." The price of dry pimento varies from 25 to 37 francs per hundred kilograms.

FARMING IMPLEMENTS AND TOOLS USED IN LAOS. We shall conclude this rapid listing of the chief crops grown in Laos by giving a list of the farming implements used in the country. These latter are just as primitive and just as rudimentary as the farming methods, and the Laotians do not make any more effort to improve the ones than to improve the others. 412. 241

The plow (Thai). The plow is extremely simple and is the primitive swing-plow formed of a single piece of bent wood. A share or "Mak-Sob-Thai" is fitted to its front end. Sometimes the share is even supplanted by cutting the stick of wood diagonally and hardening it in a fire. Drawn by a buffalo, this tiny plow cannot break the soil to any great depth, and so is used in ricefields only when the soil has been sufficiently softened by the annual inundations.

The harrow (Khat). The harrow is a sort of wooden rake .9 meter long, the teeth of which are made of ironwood or any other very hard wood, "Mai-Lek" or "Mai-Khen-Hine." This rake forms one of the sides of a triangle, the peak of which is harnessed to a buffalo.

The roller (Ham). The roller is the trunk of some hardwood tree, "Mai-Khen-Hine" for example. It has pins over which two shafts fit, leaving space to harness a buffalo.

The sickle. There are sickles of several sizes, which are called either "Kio" or "Lek Kio" without distinction. Sickles are used to cut grasses and rice.

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The spade. Two kinds of spades are used. These are called "Siem" (this is more of a scoop) and "Tiok-Kout-Dine" or, literally, Pick for breaking ground. The first is formed by a narrow iron blade which is slightly concave lengthwise and is provided with a socket into which a handle is fastened. The second is made of wood, and the blade and handle are in one piece. The lower part is fixed into an iron frame which also binds both sides [379] [Illustration] [380] [Blank page] [381] for about two-thirds of their height. The spade is used to make holes and to turn over the soil.

The machete. The machete [coupe-coupe] or felling sword which is used for heavy work is called "Pha." It is composed of a solid, broad and rather short iron blade with a thick back which is fitted into a wooden hilt with an iron ferrule.

Another kind of knife, called "Mit-Tok" or "Mit-Noi," has a blade which is narrower but longer than the above. This tool is used for fine work, such as cutting and splitting bamboo, rattan, etc.

The ax (Khouane-Hone, Khouane-Mou, or Khouane-Bong, "hatchet"). The ax is formed of a narrow, two-edged and rather short blade. A hardwood shank .6 to .7 meter long is fitted into the head. This shank itself is held by wedges, a third of the way along its length and slightly above the blade, in a mortise which crosses the end of a handle .6 to .7 meter long. The ax is used to cut trees, to hew posts and planks; etc.

It is at the very least odd to note that, except the blade which is a modern innovation, this ax is similar in every respect to the kind used during the age of polished stone.

The other tools used are: the hammer or "Khone-Lek," the saw or "Lueui," the file or "Lek-Sambai," the wood chisel or "Siou," the awl or "Lek-Si," the pincers or "Kab-Lek," the anvil or "Thang-Ti-Lek," and finally the bellows or "Soub."

CROPS TO BE ENCOURAGED

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Most of the crops which are now grown in Laos can be improved and developed, and this must be done if we are either to increase exports of farming products or to provide more well-being for the inhabitants.

In a general way, the administration can perform a useful task by increasing the number of experimental farms, by distributing [382]

some of those present. If the places were set in the shape of a cross, this was also considered a sign of bad luck. This /976/ belief, which still continues, especially in the rural areas, belongs in the realm of superstition. Do not take it seriously. 000

Nowadays the French consider the number 13 a lucky one. In France the jewelers manufacture pendants which have the number 13 inscribed on them and which are called "porte-bonheur", "luck-bringers").

The master of the house first pours a drop into his own glass when he serves something to drink; then he serves his guests. By this he shows that he would be prepared to die the first if the bottle were to contain poison. Such is French politeness.

At a banquet in the European manner one should observe the following rules of behavior: to keep erect; to put both one's hands on the table and not one one's knees; not to put one's elbows on the table while putting a hand to one's cheek; not to turn one's back on the neighbor to one's left while one is talking to the neighbor at the right and vice versa; not to make faces, not to use one's table napkin to wipe one's face; not to belch or to put a finger inside the nose or the ears; not to spit and not to blow one's nose too violently. If one is forced to leave the room for a moment, one excuses oneself with one's neighbors. It is impolite to speak all at one and the same time. Everybody should speak in his turn.

One does not cut one's piece of bread with a knife. One breaks it with one's fingers into small mouthfuls which one eats gradually as the meal progresses. When one has finished one's soup one places the spoon on the plate; one does not empty the plate by taking it in one's hands. When a dish of meat is served, one does not cut it up into little pieces in order to eat it then; that is what children do. A grown-up person eats his meat as he cuts it. He does not take the pieces with his hand. And one does not talk while one has one's mouth full.

The European does not cut a fruit in the same way the Laotian cuts it. The former places the knife underneath the fruit and pushes /412/ with his thumb while the Laotian on the other hand puts the knife on top of the fruit and then cuts from the top down.

French Customs

We often frequent French society. Therefore it is 000